

Harriet Tubman

by Margo McLoone



Young Slave

Harriet Tubman was born in 1821 in Dorchester County, Maryland. She was one of 11 children in her family. Her parents were Harriet and Benjamin Ross. She was named Araminta, but her family called her Minty. When she was 13, she was given her adult name. Her adult name was Harriet.

Harriet started working when she was six years old. She worked in her owner's house. She dusted tables and scrubbed floors. She cared for a baby. Harriet's owner was not kind to her. Harriet was often beaten. She slept on cold floors. She had very little food to eat.

When she was seven years old, Harriet tried to run away. After escaping, she became hungry and tired. She returned to her owner.

Escape Attempt

Harriet was not a good housekeeper. She went to work in the fields. The work was harder. But Harriet liked being outside.

One day in 1833, Harriet was picking cotton in a field. She saw a slave leave the field. She followed him to a nearby store.

The owner caught up with them. He told Harriet to help him catch the other slave. She refused. The owner threw a heavy weight at her head. It hit her forehead. She fell to the ground, nearly dead.

Harriet never fully healed. She had a deep scar. Throughout her life, she suffered from headaches and fainting spells.

Escape to Freedom

In 1844, Harriet married John Tubman. He had been a slave. But now he was free because his master had died. Harriet wanted her freedom, too. She knew African Americans were free in the North.

Harriet asked John to escape to the North with her. He said no. Harriet did not lose her dream. She said she would go free or die.

One night, Harriet left home in secret. She went to a trusted woman's house. The woman gave her directions to her next stop. Harriet would be safe at these places.

Harriet was hidden in a wagon and driven far away. Then she continued her journey. In 1849, she made it safely to the North. She was free.

Return

Harriet worked as a hotel maid in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She missed her family. She made plans to help them escape, too.

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On Christmas Eve in 1850, Harriet returned to Maryland. She came for her three brothers and their families.

It was not safe to tell their parents the plan. Harriet's father, Ben, covered his eyes. He wanted to be able to tell his owner that he did not see anything.

Harriet safely led her brothers and their families north. She later returned for her most daring trip. In 1857, she took her aging parents north to freedom.

Bold Rescuer

From 1850 to 1860, Harriet made at least 15 trips to free slaves. It was very dangerous. By law, slaves who ran away to the North could be captured. Then, they were returned to their owners.

Slaves were not safe anywhere in the United States. People put up posters offering a reward for Harriet's capture. She started to lead slaves farther north to Canada.

Harriet hid herself in many ways. She moved through swamp water and rivers. This kept bloodhounds from finding her scent. The dogs could not track her. Harriet also carried a pistol for security.

Harriet led more than 300 slaves to freedom. She never lost one person. She was never caught. Her final trip was in late 1860.

Civil War Spy

In 1861, the Civil War began. A civil war is a conflict between people within the same country. Harriet joined soldiers fighting for the North. She fought against slavery in the South. She served as a nurse for wounded soldiers. She went into enemy territory to spy on troops.

Once, Harriet went on a rescue mission with Northern troops. They freed more than 750 slaves from prisons. Harriet served in the army for three years. People called her General Tubman.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. This written order freed all slaves in the United States. The war ended two years later. The northern states won.

Last Years

After the Civil War, Harriet brought her parents to New York. They lived in her house.

Harriet was free but poor. The army promised to pay her. Eventually she received payments of 20 dollars a month.

In 1869, Sarah Bradford wrote a book about Harriet. It was called *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*. Harriet earned money from the book's sales.

In 1869, Harriet married Nelson Davis. He was a Civil War soldier.

In 1908, Harriet opened a home in Auburn, New York. The home was for older African Americans. Harriet was 75 years old herself. But she continued to care for others.

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Daring Woman

Harriet risked her life to help other people. She was not afraid of danger.

After slavery ended, Harriet continued her work. She fought for the rights to free slaves. She worked to give women the right to vote. She built a home for poor and older African Americans. It was called the Harriet Tubman Home.

Harriet Tubman died in Auburn, New York, in 1913. She was nearly 93 years old. Today tourists still visit her home. It stands as a memory of the brave woman, Harriet Tubman.

Harriet Tubman Timeline

1821	Araminta Ross born in Maryland
1827	Starts working as a slave
1828	Tries to run away but returns
1833	Is hit in the head and nearly dies
1834	Is given her adult name, Harriet
1844	Marries free man John tubman
1849	Escapes to the North - and freedom
1850	Begins leading slaves to freedom including her brothers and their families
1857	Leads her parents north to freedom
1860	Makes final trip to free slaves
1861	Begins fighting for the North in Civil War
1863	Becomes free according to Emancipation Proclamation
1865	Returns to New York with parents after Civil War
1869	Has book published about her; marries Nelson Davis
1908	Opens a home in New York for older African Americans
1913	Dies in New York at the age of 92

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Name _____ **Date** _____

Directions: Read the passage “Harriet Tubman”, then circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. What is the purpose of the time line in the article?
 - A. to show readers the years Harriet Tubman lived
 - B. to show important events in Harriet Tubman’s life
 - C. to identify the years Harriet Tubman was married
 - D. to mark the time the Civil War begins and ends

2. Based on the article and the time line, in 1849 Harriet Tubman
 - A. led other slaves to freedom.
 - B. led her brothers to freedom.
 - C. found freedom for herself.
 - D. led her parents to freedom.

3. Based on the article and the time line, Harriet Tubman devoted her life to
 - A. helping African-American people.
 - B. escaping from slavery.
 - C. nursing wounded soldiers in the Civil War.
 - D. freeing her family from slavery.

4. Based on the time line, Harriet Tubman
 - A. died at a young age.
 - B. escaped to the North twice.
 - C. published two books.
 - D. married twice.

5. Based on the story and the time line, Harriet Tubman
 - A. was born in Maryland in 1821.
 - B. was given her adult name in 1844.
 - C. published a book about Nelson Davis.
 - D. led slaves to freedom for twenty years.

<p style="text-align: center;">Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 5 LA.A.2.2.8 Reference Form B</p>
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Answer Key – Harriet Tubman

LA.A.2.2.8: The student identifies meanings through the process of selecting and/or organizing information from a single text or across texts. This process may involve application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation appropriate to fifth grade.

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